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MUSEUM FUNDING from Page C1

debate, Culberson explained that the "National Numismatic Collection of the Smithsonian is not currently on display, except for a few coins or currency in various exhibits related to the coins or currency or the images displayed on them."

The Smithsonian closed the museum's numismatic exhibits in 2004 to allow for renovations to the area of the Museum of American History that housed them. Smithsonian officials have said they do not plan to reopen the exhibits, although Smithsonian curators will include items from the National Numismatic Collection in other displays where appropriate.

Culberson added that the collection, "one of the largest and best of its sort in the world, should be displayed in its own building here in Washington, in such a way that helps people understand not only the history of commerce and coins and currency in the United States," but the history of the development of the nation.

Culberson said his idea would be for a "separate museum here in Washington, not as a subset or subsidiary of any existing Smithsonian museum, but that such a museum could also display examples of other forms of exchange of value, from barter and wampum to coins and currency of other countries, to electronic transfers of value, along with demonstrations of how coins and currencies are produced in its own stand-alone museum."

He also said he foresaw that the "museum's exhibits could be kept vital by constant development of traveling exhibits to museums around the country, including those of the American Numismatic Association, the American Numismatic Society, and perhaps, if it is constructed, a museum in the old Mint in San Francisco."

The bill calls for not more than 50,000 gold \$50 coins and not more than 400,000 silver dollars.

The amended legislation mandates the obverse of the \$50 gold coin bear an image of the sun while the reverse bear "a design emblematic of the sacrifice of the United States astronauts who lost their lives in the line of duty over the course of the space program."

The legislation calls for the edge of the \$50 coin to "bear the names and dates of the spacecraft missions" in which U.S. astronauts have died.

The legislation also calls for the designs and inscriptions on the obverse and reverse sides of the gold \$50 coin to be in high relief.

Nine different silver dollars would be issued, to depict on the obverse each of the nine solar planets. The reverse design for each silver dollar would be "emblematic of discoveries and missions of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory to the planet depicted on the obverse of the coins," subject to the following requirements:

➤ The reverse of the coin honoring the Earth must feature "images emblematic of, and honoring, the discoveries and missions" of NASA and "the Mercury, Gemini and Space Shuttle missions and other

manned earth-orbiting missions, and the Apollo missions to the Moon."

➤ The reverse of the Jupiter coin must feature a "depiction of the Galilean moon Europa and depict both a past and future mission to Europa."

➤ The reverse of the Saturn coin must depict a "depiction of the moon Titan and depict both a past and future mission to Titan."

➤ The reverse of the Pluto coin must include a design emblematic of NASA's "telescopic exploration of deep space" and "the ongoing search for Earth-like planets orbiting other stars." Pluto is the only solar planet to which NASA has not launched an exploratory mission.

The amended legislation also specifies "it is the sense of the Congress that, to the extent practicable, the edge of each \$1 coin should bear the names and dates or range of dates of missions or mission types to the planet depicted on the reverse."

The legislation specifies that the designs would be selected "on the basis of the realism and scientific accuracy of the images and on the extent to which the images are reminiscent" of the designs on coins from the "Golden Age of Coinage" in the early 20th century in the United States.

The legislation also specifies that designs would be selected by the Treasury secretary after consultation with the NASA Administrator, the JPL director and the Commission of Fine Arts and their review by the Citizens Coin Advisory Committee.

The legislation also mandates the "symbolic inclusion of precious metals that have flown in space" and that they be blended with other bullion to produce the coins. All federal agencies that have in their "possession any craft, or any part of a craft, that flew in space," would retrieve all gold, silver, copper and other metals "that can be retrieved without harming any such craft or part that may be of continuing use for its original purpose or for research, or whose preservation is appropriate for historical purposes," and convey them to the U.S. Mint director.

The legislation calls for the coins to be struck in Proof only. Production would be limited to between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31, 2008, at one Mint facility.

The legislation would also authorize the production of bronze duplicates of the \$50 gold coin to be sold to the public "at a price the [Treasury] secretary determines to be appropriate."

The original legislation sought four different denominations with a minimum of 12 different coins – 75,000 gold \$10 coins, 100,000 gold \$5 coins, 500,000 silver dollars and 500,000 silver half dollars.

Those provisions would have violated U.S. law regulating commemorative coin programs. Under a law effective Jan. 1, 1999, a commemorative coin program can offer copper-nickel clad half dollars, but not silver half dollars, and it can offer either a gold \$5 coin or a gold \$10 coin, but not both. The law does permit issuance of a \$50 gold commemorative coin. **CW**